



United States  
Department of  
Agriculture



Forest  
Service

March  
2014

# Draft Decision Notice and Finding of No Significant Impact

## Pack II Road Decommissioning Project

Powell Ranger District, Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forests  
Idaho County, Idaho



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**Pack II Road Decommissioning Project  
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# **Pack II Road Decommissioning Project**

## **Draft Decision Notice and Finding of No Significant Impact**

**Powell Ranger District  
Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forests  
Northern Region, USDA Forest Service**

**March 2014**

**Responsible Agency:** USDA, Forest Service

**Responsible Official:** Craig Trulock, District Ranger  
Powell Ranger District  
Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forests

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Decision Notice  
& Finding of No Significant Impact  
**Pack II Road Decommissioning Project**  
**USDA Forest Service**  
**Powell Ranger District, Clearwater National Forest**  
**Idaho County, Idaho**

## **I. INTRODUCTION**

The Pack II Road Decommissioning Project Environmental Assessment (EA) documents the analysis and findings of a no action and one action alternative for decommissioning roads in the Pack II Project Area. I have reviewed the EA and related materials, including the analysis file and all public comments to the EA. I base my decision upon that review.

The project is located approximately 1.5 miles southeast of Lolo Pass. The Pack II Road Decommissioning Project is limited in scope to a one square mile area on the Powell Ranger District of the Clearwater National Forest. The project area consists of the following sections, Boise Meridian, Idaho County, Idaho.

<b>Township</b>	<b>Range</b>	<b>Section</b>	<b>Watershed</b>
<b>38N</b>	<b>15E</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>Pack Creek</b>
<b>38N</b>	<b>15E</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>Pack Creek</b>

This area was identified in the Crooked Brushy Ecosystem Assessment at the Watershed Scale (USFS, 2004) as having excessive roads with frequent stream crossings, road-intercepted seeps and unstable construction on sidecast waste. Culverts within the analysis area have been identified as log culvert structures which are currently exhibiting a high failure rate. A high degree of fillslope slumping has also been identified along roads within the analysis area.

The roads in the analysis area were built for timber access. The project area is adjacent to private timber ground, owned and managed by Western Pacific Timber (WPT). The majority of roads proposed for treatment are either local or unclassified roads, most of which begin and end within the project area or, if they run on to private land, have alternative access. All the roads proposed for treatment are currently closed yearlong to all motorized vehicles. Although the majority of the roads are currently overgrown with brush that excludes motorized access, surface erosion, fill sloughing, and culvert failures continue to occur. Roads in the analysis area have the potential to continue to deposit sediment into streams through chronic erosion and episodic events (culvert failures, fill sloughing and landslides).

A roads analysis was done to determine which roads were no longer needed for management (timber, recreation, administrative). The Pack II Road Decommissioning Project is a result of that analysis. This project supports the continued desire for the Powell District to conduct restoration activities that benefit both aquatic and terrestrial resources.

## **II. PURPOSE AND NEED FOR ACTION**

The purpose and need for the Pack II Road Decommissioning project is described in detail on page 3 of the EA. The primary objective for decommissioning roads is to reduce watershed impacts by reclaiming roads no longer needed for management. These roads have the potential to fail in the future and deposit sediment into streams. Removing roads from the landscape also increases habitat utilization by big game, and reduces road maintenance costs. The purpose and need supports proposed actions to decommission roads. The project would benefit streams, big game, and reduce road maintenance costs.

## **III. DECISION**

After careful consideration of the analyses, applicable laws, and public comments, I have decided to implement Alternative 2. This decision is based on information contained in the project record including the EA and the effects analysis described in Chapter 3, the resource specialist reports, the management requirements of the applicable laws and policies, the mitigation measures and design features described below and the comments received during the public involvement process for this project. Alternative 2 will implement the following management practices and activities.

### **A. Management Activities**

Under this alternative, the Forest Service would meet the project purpose and need by implementing the following activities:

- Decommission 3.2 miles of system road. These roads are not needed for future management. Roads proposed for decommissioning would be fully obliterated with hillslopes restored to natural contours and culverts removed from all stream and seep crossings. All channels would be restored to natural channel grades. Decommissioned roads would be removed from the Forest transportation system.
- Decommission 19.7 miles of non-system skid trails or jammer roads. These roads have not been used for management in the recent past and are not needed in the future. Approximately 1.3 miles of these would be abandoned with no work done on them. The rest of these roads would be fully obliterated with hillslopes restored to natural contours and culverts removed from all stream and seep crossings. All channels would be restored to natural channel grades.
- Store 3.8 miles of Forest Service system road in a hydrologically stable condition. Roads proposed for storage would have all culverts removed and all stream crossings restored to natural grade. The road prism would be outsloped to approximately 20% sideslope and not to original hillslope contour, except in areas that require full recontour to assure stability. The intent of long-term storage is to stabilize the road-stream crossings and road prism in a maintenance-free condition until access on the stored road is needed in the future. Roads in long-term storage remain on the Forest transportation system.

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Monitoring and mitigation requirements are described below. BMP's, mitigation measures, and monitoring requirements will be implemented as part of my Decision.

## **B. Design Features and Mitigation Measures**

All roads have been surveyed to determine the specific treatment needs. Treatments range from abandonment to full recontour of the slope. Factors used to determine the amount of treatment include length, slope, and the locations of seeps, streams, and unstable areas. Given the topography of the area, most of the roads would receive the following treatments unless identified otherwise:

- Where noxious weeds exist, roads would be pre-treated with appropriate chemicals (the effect of weed treatment was analyzed under the Lochsa Weeds EA, 2007).
- Road surfaces would be decompacted and road prisms recontoured or strongly outsloped, fill would be removed from unstable areas.
- For every road, all culverts and ditches would be pulled.
- Road approaches would be recontoured and blocked with native materials (rocks, logs, plants) so that the area is inaccessible to vehicles. The forest has been successful in preventing use of these roads by motorized vehicles after obliteration is complete.
- A narrow (2' wide) trail would be created at the top edge of the decommissioned road to allow for unimpeded foot and wildlife traffic.
- At completion, the decommissioned or stored road would no longer require maintenance and would not be accessible to motorized vehicles.

The following design features would be used to minimize sediment delivery and other impacts to streams during culvert removal and road decommissioning. These measures may include any combination of the following:

- When working in the stream, all fill would be removed from around pipes before pipe removal. Where this is not possible, a non-eroding diversion would be used. A non-eroding diversion would be used in any channels where the culvert has been removed or has failed;
- Diversions would be installed operated and removed such that erosion and sedimentation is minimized.
- Sediment traps and settling basins would be used to ensure that muddy water does not return to the stream.
- Fill material would be placed in stable areas outside of stream channels and flood plains.
- Channel banks would be armored with large rock, woody debris and vegetation when needed.
- Any soil and vegetative disturbance more than 50 feet upstream or downstream of the culvert site would be shown in the design. Channel and vegetative restoration would be part of the plans.
- Revegetation of treated areas would occur by seeding with a native seed mix, scattering duff excavated from natural ground above road cutslope, and transplanting native forbs and shrubs which are growing on-site either adjacent to or on the road surface.



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- Treatments along stream crossings require a complete recontour of all fill material with stream channels restored to natural grade and dimensions. Each stream crossing receives the same revegetation prescription as the roadbed with a special emphasis on transplants of riparian vegetation.
- Mulching of disturbed ground would occur using natural mulch (onsite woody debris, logs, and stumps) as well as imported weed-free straw mulch (used in areas where natural mulch is scarce).
- The contractor would dispose of removed culverts and other structural materials off National Forest ground.
- Equipment used for instream work shall be cleaned of external oil, grease, dirt and mud; and leaks repaired; prior to arriving at the project site. All equipment would be inspected by the COR before unloading at site. Equipment would be inspected daily for leaks or accumulations of grease, and identified problems corrected before entering streams or areas that drain directly to streams or wetlands. This cleaning shall also remove all dirt and plant parts to ensure that noxious weeds and aquatic invasive species are not brought to the site.
- Equipment used for in-stream or riparian work (including chainsaws and other hand power tools) shall be fueled and serviced in an area that would not deliver fuel, oil, etc. to riparian areas and streams.
- The project would follow the provisions to minimize equipment fuel/oil leakage and spills.
- Detection of nests, wildlife sightings and other wildlife behavior will be relayed to the wildlife biologist in a timely manner (the same day as they were detected) for mitigations of project activities if necessary.

Project design features are aimed at minimizing effects to specific resource issues. Many of these are derived from site specific best management practices (BMP) from the Idaho Forest Practices Act and Stream Channel Alteration Handbook.

Best Management Practices (BMPs) would be applied to maintain slope stability, and minimize soil disturbance, erosion and sediment delivery to floodplains and/or wetlands from road decommissioning work.

Any required permits for disturbance of water or wetlands would be obtained prior to initiating work (Army Corps of Engineers 404 permit, Idaho Department of Water Resources Stream Alteration Permit). Any mitigation measures identified in the permitting process would be incorporated into the project plans.

### **C. Monitoring**

No specific monitoring for the project is proposed; however some monitoring may occur in coordination with other road decommissioning activities and culvert removal sites across the Forest. The Forest Watershed Restoration Program Leader would be responsible for any monitoring of project activities.

## **IV. RATIONALE FOR THE DECISION**

My criteria for making a decision on this project was based on how well the management actions analyzed in the EA address the purpose and need of the project, and considerations of issues that were raised during the scoping process and the comment period on the EA. I considered Forest Plan and Record of Decision standards and guidance for the project area, and took into account competing interests and values of the public.

I have reviewed the proposed action (EA page 4), and have determined it is responsive to the issues and concerns as well as purpose and need for action. The issues (EA, page 6) were developed based on public comments and an interdisciplinary review of existing conditions in the project area. The purpose and need for action (EA, page 3) is consistent with the goals and objectives of the Forest Plan (EA pages 32-34). I have also read and considered actions analyzed in the Forest Plan as amended, the Forest Plan Final Environmental Impact Statement, the Forest Plan Record of Decision and the Forest Plan Stipulation of Dismissal.

I reviewed the issues that were considered but not analyzed in detail (EA, page 11) to ensure that an adequate range of alternatives was considered. I reviewed public comments from the original scoping period as well as those that were received for the EA, and found that no new issues or concerns were raised.

The interdisciplinary team (IDT) considered all public comments that were received when developing the EA. One alternative was considered in detail. I find that the range of alternatives considered was thorough and complete, based on existing conditions on the ground in combination with public comments and concerns.

In summary, environmental effects to overall ecosystem health are determined to be beneficial in this analysis (EA, Chapter 3), with potentially detrimental effects mitigated through project mitigation measures described on pages 10 and 11. Alternative 2 was designed to respond to the purpose and need described in Chapter 1 of the EA.

### **A. Meeting the Purpose and Need**

I have selected Alternative 2 because it best meets the Purpose and Need for action and is responsive to public comments and other agency concerns (EA, page 5; Decision Notice, Appendix A; and project file, comment letters). Site specific analysis determined that this area is in need of a reduction in road density. The environment in the project area can be improved and moved toward desired conditions as a result of this project.

Specifically, Alternative 2 best meets the Purpose and Need because:

- It reduces the impacts to water quality and aquatic habitats associated with unneeded roads
- Improves habitat conditions for fish, including westslope cutthroat trout, and other aquatic organisms
- Reduces road density to improve terrestrial habitat utilization
- Reduces road maintenance costs.



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## **B. Consideration of Issues and Concerns**

Issues were generated internally, by the Interdisciplinary Team, and externally, through public comments. Involvement of the Idaho Department of Fish and Game, Idaho Division of Environmental Quality, Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation, and many other County, State and Federal Agencies, the Nez Perce Tribe, private individuals, and environmental organizations was sought to provide detailed information for defining the issues, concerns, mitigations and treatment options.

The interdisciplinary team designed the project to minimize effects on resources. Analysis of public and internal comments identified no major issues that would drive additional alternatives, especially when existing environmental conditions are considered. However, these comments did identify a number of concerns or non-significant issues that deserved consideration, and were used to refine the scope of the alternatives considered. These concerns were addressed through project design features. I find that the range of alternatives considered is thorough and complete.

Other issues were raised and discussed in the EA (page 7 and 12), but were not evaluated in detail because the alternative already mitigated the issue (such as water quality and aquatic habitat conditions) or the issue was not applicable to the proposal (such as threatened, endangered, and sensitive species).

I believe the issues and concerns identified throughout the scoping and planning process were fully addressed during alternative development and analysis.

## **C. Consideration of Public and Other Agency Comments**

A summary of the comments that were received for the Pack II Road Decommissioning proposal, and my response to those comments, is attached to this document as Appendix A. The original comment letters and all other comments received are included in the project file.

The formal scoping period for this project began on February 1, 2013. A total of 3 letters were received. Comments that were received during that time were used to develop the issues that were included in the NEPA document, and to ensure that those issues were adequately analyzed.

The 30-day comment period for the EA began on February 18, 2014 and ended on March 24, 2014. One comment letter was received and considered.

I find that the selected alternative responds to the issues and concerns brought forward by the public and other agencies.

## **D. Forest Plan Consistency**

The Forestwide goals, standards, and guidelines most applicable to this project pertain to road management for the benefit of aquatic and terrestrial habitats (EA, Page 32). Goals, objectives and standards for Management Areas E1 and M2 are described on pages II-1 through II-40 of the Clearwater Forest Plan. Alternative 2 will reduce potential sediment inputs into the aquatic ecosystem, regulate the use of roads and trails where needed to accomplish wildlife, and watershed objectives, while reducing road maintenance costs. Project design features and Best Management Practices would be used to minimize effects to resources (DN, pages 2-4, EA pages

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10 and 11, and Chapter 3).

## **V. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED**

The selected alternative and a no action alternative were analyzed in detail. Additionally, I considered one other issue that was not analyzed in detail as an alternative, for reasons described below. I selected Alternative 2 after considering how each alternative would respond to the purpose and need to improve aquatic habitats, improve utilization of big game habitat and reduce road maintenance costs. I considered how each alternative would respond to the issues used to develop design criteria and/or mitigation and issues carried through the analysis. I also considered the potential direct, indirect and cumulative effects of resources, such as wildlife, aquatic resources, and sensitive plants for each alternative. The features that I considered when making my Decision are briefly discussed below for each alternative.

### **Alternative 1: No Action**

This alternative provided the perspective of the effects of no road decommissioning occurring within the Pack II Road Decommissioning project area at this time. This alternative represented the existing condition against which the other alternatives were compared. Under the No Action alternative, no watershed improvement activities would occur at this time. Alternative 1 does not meet the purpose and need for action (EA, page 9).

### **Alternative 2: Selected Alternative**

This alternative will fully meet all aspects of the purpose and need and is described in detail on pages 2 of this document.

### **Other Alternatives not Considered in Detail**

Another alternative was crafted from issues that arose during scoping. One commenter requested conversion of certain roads to OHV trails. I dismissed this alternative as all roads within the project area are currently closed year round to motorized vehicles and most all are also heavily vegetated and relatively impassable to OHV and foot travel. The suggested alternative would require new construction that is beyond the scope of this analysis. In addition, the proposed route would be redundant to an existing drivable loop.

## **VI. PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT**

As described above, the need for this action was identified after completion of a transportation analysis. On February 1, 2013, a scoping letter explaining the proposal and requesting comments was mailed to 160 individuals, and/or organizations, including interested parties, other agencies, and the Nez Perce Tribe. A Legal Notice appeared in the Lewiston Tribune on February 1, 2013. Three comments were received.

The IDT used the comments received from the public and other agencies to formulate the issues to be addressed in the EA. To address these issues, the IDT created the alternatives described

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above.

The comment EA was sent out to the commenters and the Nez Perce Tribe. In addition, a legal notice appeared in the Lewiston Tribune on February 18, 2014. One comment letter was received.

I considered all of the public comments that were submitted in reaching my Decision to select Alternative 2. Responses to public comments are included in Appendix A of this document.

## **VII. FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT**

After considering the environmental effects described in the EA, I have determined that these actions will not have an effect on the quality of the human environment considering the context and intensity of impacts (40 CFR 1508.27). Thus, an environmental impact statement will not be prepared. I base my finding on the following:

### **A. Context**

The setting of the project is in an intensively managed roaded area. The resources affected by the proposal are described in the EA. The Selected Alternative is consistent with the management direction, standards and guidelines outlined in the Clearwater National Forest Plan. Local issues were identified through the scoping process and considered in alternative development and analysis. The project area is limited in size and the activities are limited in duration. Effects are local in nature and not likely to affect regional or national resources.

### **B. Intensity**

I have determined the following with regard to the intensity of this project as identified in 40 CFR 1508.27.

1. ***The analysis considered both beneficial and adverse effects.*** As described in Chapter 3 of the EA, impacts from this project are both beneficial and adverse. The adverse effects of road obliteration are minor in nature and will not permanently impair streams, plant, or wildlife habitat. The effects are short-term sediment input to streams, human disturbance to big game during project activities, and potential but minor losses of habitat for wildlife and sensitive plants. Long term effects are beneficial for aquatic, wildlife and plant species and their habitat. The beneficial and adverse impacts of this decision are addressed in Chapter 3 of the EA and the BE/BA (project file).
2. ***There will be no significant effects on public health and safety,*** because OSHA safety regulations will be met during implementation and project inspectors will monitor all aspects of implementation to ensure public safety. Road decommissioning activities have been conducted across the Forest over the last 16 years without creating public safety or health problems.
3. ***There will be no significant effects on unique characteristics of the area,*** such as historic or cultural resources, park lands, prime farmlands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas because of protection measures integrated into the design of the project (EA, pages 10-11) and based on the discussion of effects found in

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the EA, Chapter 3. There are no park lands, prime farmlands, roadless areas, ecologically critical areas or wild and scenic rivers within the affected area. The effects to wetlands (streams) are minor in the short term with long term benefits. No historic or cultural resources would be affected by the activities.

4. ***The effects on the quality of the human environment are not likely to be highly controversial.*** The effects of the project are limited to the Pack II Road Decommissioning project area. No person has provided evidence that the environmental effects of the project have been wrongly predicted; therefore, the effects are not controversial. I believe we have addressed the known biological, social, and economic issues sufficiently to avoid scientific controversy over the scope and intensity of effects. Based upon reports and discussions with professional resource specialists, there is agreement by my staff and other professionals and agencies consulted about the effects and conclusions identified in the analysis. I conclude that the effects of this project do not represent a controversial impact upon the quality of the human environment, provided the design features and mitigation measures outlined in the EA are implemented.
5. ***The degree to which the possible effects on the human environment is not highly uncertain nor does it involve unique or unknown risks.*** The actions described in this Decision are not new. The Forest Service has a long history of implementing these activities across the Clearwater National Forest. The effects analysis shows the effects are not uncertain, and do not involve unique or unknown risk. Chapter 3 of the EA discloses the direct, indirect and cumulative effects of the selected actions. Pertinent scientific literature has been reviewed and incorporated into the analysis process and the technical analyses conducted for determinations on the impacts to the resources are supportable with use of accepted techniques, reliable data, and professional judgement.
6. ***The action is not likely to establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects,*** because it conforms to all existing Forest Plan direction and is applicable only to the project area.
7. ***These actions are not related to other actions that, when combined, will have significant impacts.*** Cumulative effects are documented in Chapter 3 of the EA. There are no impacts to the overall watershed that would be cumulative to impacts from other activities. Effects to aquatic, wildlife and plant habitats and species are described in detail in Chapter 3 of the EA and are generally minor when considered with other activities in the general area. (see EA pages 14 -31).
8. ***The action will have no significant adverse effect on districts, sites, highways, structures, or objects listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places,*** because no heritage resource sites have been identified in the activity areas.
9. ***The action will not adversely affect any endangered or threatened species or its habitat that has been determined to be critical under the Endangered Species Act of 1973.*** The only listed species or critical habitat found within the project area is Canada Lynx. The biological assessment determined that the project would have “no effect” on steelhead trout, bull trout, or fall Chinook salmon. The project “may affect, but not likely

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**adversely affect”** Canada lynx. (See Project File, BE/BA).

10. *The action will not violate Federal, State, and local laws or requirements for the protection of the environment.* Applicable laws and regulations were considered in the EA (see EA pages 32-34). The action is also consistent with the Clearwater National Forest Plan (See EA pages 32). There is no conflict with any Federal or State or local laws.

## **VIII. FINDINGS REQUIRED BY OTHER LAWS AND REGULATIONS**

I have determined that my decision is consistent with the laws, regulations, and agency policies related to this project. The following summarizes findings required by major environmental laws. Compliance with other laws, regulations, and policies are listed in various sections of the EA, the Project Record, and the Forest Plan.

### **A. Watershed and Fisheries Resources Regulatory Framework**

All Federal and State laws and regulations applicable to water quality would be applied to this road decommissioning project, including 36 CFR 219.27, the Clean Water Act, and Idaho State Water Quality Standards, Idaho Forest Practices Act, Idaho Stream Channel Protection Act, and Best Management Practices (BMP's). In addition, laws and regulations require the maintenance of viable populations of aquatic species including the National Forest Management Act (36 CFR 219.19), subsequent Forest Service direction (Fish and Wildlife Policy, 9500-4) and Forest Service manual direction (FSM 2470, 2600).

### **B. Endangered Species Act**

The Biological Assessment documents a “no effect” determination for bull trout, fall Chinook salmon and steelhead trout and a “**may affect, but not likely adversely affect**” for Canada lynx. Concurrence on this call is currently being sought from U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Under provisions of this Act, Federal agencies are directed to seek to conserve endangered and threatened species and to ensure that actions are not likely to jeopardize the continued existence of any of these species. Upon review of the Pack Cherokee Road Decommissioning EA Chapter 3 and the Biological Assessment, I find that the Selected Alternative complies with this Act.

### **C. Environmental Justice**

The Selected Alternative was assessed to determine whether it would disproportionately impact minority or low-income populations, in accordance with Executive Order 12898 (EA, page 35). No impacts to minority or low income populations were identified during scoping or effects assessment.

### **D. Forest Plan Consistency**

The Pack II Road Decommissioning EA is tiered to the Clearwater Forest Plan and the Clearwater Forest Plan EIS, as amended. The project complies with all Forest Plan standards and guidelines. It removes roads no longer needed for management which in has positive effects

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fish and wildlife species, including Management Indicator and Sensitive Species. BMPs would be used to minimize effects to species during project implementation. Applying BMPs would also help to meet both State and Forest Plan water quality standards.

### **PACFISH**

This project complies with PACFISH standards and guidelines in that it has been designed to have a long term benefit to PACFISH Riparian Management Objectives (RMOs), including bank stability, pool frequency, water temperature, large woody debris and width/depth ratio.

### **Northern Rockies Lynx Management Direction**

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service listed Canada lynx as a threatened species under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) in March 2000. Critical habitat was not designated on the Nez Perce National Forest (74 FR 8616 8702 and USDI Fish and Wildlife Service 2009).

The Clearwater Forest has been identified as one of many forests that contains occupied habitat for the Canada Lynx under the Northern Rockies Lynx Management Direction (USDA Forest Service 2007).

The Pack II Road Decommissioning project is consistent with applicable objectives and guidelines of the Northern Rockies Lynx Management Direction. It is determined that the project will have “May affect; Not Likely to adversely affect” on Canada lynx or their habitat.

## **E. National Environmental Policy Act**

National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) provisions have been followed as required in 40 CFR 1500. The proposed actions comply with the intent and requirements of NEPA. The Environmental Assessment analyzes a reasonable range of alternatives, including a No Action Alternative. It also discloses the expected effects of each alternative and discusses the identified issues and concerns.

## **F. National Historic Preservation Act**

This project complies with the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended. Previous investigations examined most of the proposed project area and no properties eligible or potentially eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places were identified. Based on these result, the extent of past disturbance from road construction and timber harvest, and the terrain it was determined that this project will have no affect to known cultural resources. See project file for more information.

## **G. Neotropical Migratory Bird Laws**

This project complies with the Migratory Bird Treaty Act and the MOU to carry out Executive Order 13186 which authorizes activities including habitat protection, restoration, enhancement, necessary modification, and implementation of actions that benefit priority migratory bird species.

## **F. Travel Management Rule (November 2, 2005)**

The Clearwater National Forest is currently completing a Forestwide travel planning analysis consistent with the requirement of the 2005 Travel Management Rule. The Pack II Road



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Decommissioning project is consistent with the Travel Rule by conducting a transportation analysis of the project area to determine the minimum motorized transportation system needed.

### ***IX. Administrative Review Opportunity***

The Pack II Road Decommissioning project is subject to the objection process pursuant to 36 CFR 218, subparts A and B. This decision is not subject to appeal pursuant to 36 CFR 215.129(i).

As the Deciding Official, of the Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forests, on the Lochsa Ranger District, I have prepared an Environmental Assessment (EA) and draft Decision Notice and Finding of No Significant Impact (Decision Notice/FONSI) for the Pack II Road Decommissioning Project as described in this document.

The EA and draft Decision Notice/FONSI are available on-line at: <http://www.fs.fed.us/nepa/fs-usda.gov/main/nezperceclearwater/landmanagement/projects>. These documents are also available for review at the Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forests office, at 12730 Highway 12, Orofino, Idaho 83544.

#### **How to file an Objection and Timeframe**

Objections will be accepted only from those who have previously submitted written comments specific to the proposed project during scoping or other opportunity for public comment (36 CFR 218.5). Issues raised in objections must be based on previously submitted timely, specific written comments regarding the proposed project unless based on new information arising after the designated comment opportunities.

The objection must contain the minimum content requirements specified in §218.8(d) and incorporation of documents by reference is permitted only as provided in §218.8(b). It is the objector's responsibility to ensure timely filing of a written objection with the reviewing officer pursuant to §218.9.

At a minimum, an objection must include the following (36 CFR 218.8(d)): *1) The objector's name and address, with a telephone number if available; 2) signature or other verification of authorship upon request; 3) when multiple names are listed on the objection, identification of the lead objector; 4) the name of the proposed project, the name and title of the Responsible Official, and the name(s) of the National Forest(s) and/or Ranger District(s) on which the proposed project will be implemented; 5) a description of those aspects of the proposed project addressed by the objection, including specific issues related to the proposed project; how the objector believes the environmental analysis or draft decision specifically violates law, regulation, or policy; suggested remedies that would resolve the objection; supporting reasons for the reviewing officer to consider and 6) a statement that demonstrates the connection between prior specific written comments on the particular proposed project or activity and the content of the objection, unless the objection concerns an issue that arose after the designated opportunity for comment.*

An objection, including any attachments, must be filed in writing (regular mail, fax, Email, hand-delivery, express delivery, or messenger service) with the Reviewing Officer within 45 days of the date of publication of this legal notice (36 CFR 218.7(c)) in the Lewiston Tribune. The Reviewing Officer for this project is Rick Brazell, Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forest Supervisor. Objections may be submitted to him by mail at: Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forest, 903 3rd St., Kamiah, ID 83536; by fax at (208) 935-4275; or by Email at [comments-northern-clearwater-powell@fs.fed.us](mailto:comments-northern-clearwater-powell@fs.fed.us). The acceptable formats for submitting an electronic objection are: MS Word, Word Perfect, or RTF. Please type "Pack II Road Decommissioning Project Objection" in the e-mail subject line. Hand-delivered objections will

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be accepted at the Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forest Supervisors Office, between the hours of 8 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday. All objections will be open to public inspection during the objection process (36 CFR 218.8).

The objection must contain the minimum content requirements specified in §218.8(d) and incorporation of documents by reference is permitted only as provided in §218.8(b). It is the objector's responsibility to ensure timely filing of a written objection with the reviewing officer pursuant to §218.9. All objections are available for public inspection during and after the objection process.

All objections will be open to public inspection during the objection process (36 CFR 218.8). Resolution meetings with the objector(s) will be scheduled by the Reviewing Officer. The reviewing officer must issue a written response to the objector(s) concerning their objection(s) within 45 days following the end of the objection filing period.

## **X. Implementation Date**

The project is scheduled to be completed field season 2014.

If no objections are filed within the 45-day objection filing period, the decision may be signed on, but not before the 5<sup>th</sup> business day following the end of the objection filing period.

If objections are filed, the reviewing officer must issue a written response to the objector(s) concerning their objection(s) within 45 days following the end of the objection filing period. The Decision Notice/FONSI can be signed as soon as a written objection response is made.

Implementation of the decision may occur immediately after the Decision Notice/FONSI is signed.

## **Contact Person**

For further information concerning this decision, contact Anne Connor, Interdisciplinary Team Leader, Clearwater National Forest, 12730 Highway 12, Orofino, ID 83544. (phone 208- 476-8235).

Craig Trulock  
District Ranger  
Lochsa Ranger District

Date

## **APPENDIX A**

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**RESPONSE TO COMMENTS**

On February 1, 2013, a scoping letter was sent to the interested public on the NEPA mailing list. Three individuals/organizations commented on the Pack II Decommissioning Project during the scoping period. In addition, one of these commenters submitted a comment during the draft EA comment period (February 18, 2014 – March 24, 2014). Comments and responses are summarized below.

State of Idaho Department of Environmental Quality

This project is considered a nonpoint source activity by the Idaho Water Quality Standards and is subject to IDAPA 58.01.02.350. IDAPA 58.01.02.350 requires implementation of approved or specialized best management practices (BMPs) to protect the beneficial uses of waters of the State. BMP effectiveness monitoring, including a process to modify BMPs shown to be ineffective, is considered an inherent component of BMP implementation.

*Response: All Federal and State laws and regulations applicable to water quality would be applied to the project, including 36 CFR 219.27, the Clean Water Act, and Idaho State Water Quality Standards, Idaho Forest Practices Act, Idaho Stream Channel Protection Act, and Best Management Practices (BMP's).*

DEQ assume PACFISH standards will be applied to this project and considers them a reasonable and knowledgeable effort to minimize impacts to state waters.

*Response: PACFISH standards and guidelines will be applied to this project. These are generally related to managing roads, design features and mitigation measures such that they do not retard or prevent attainment of Riparian Management Objectives. Riparian Management Objectives (RMOs) for "forested streams" include the following stream habitat variables: bank stability, pool frequency (pools per mile), water temperature, large woody debris and width/depth ratio. The project has been designed to have a long term benefit to these objectives through road removal in Riparian Habitat Conservation Areas.*

State of Idaho Department of Environmental Quality

The project area is adjacent to Glade Creek State Park...(and) popular backcountry skiing destinations. The road decommission should help improve water quality along Glade Creek ...(and) improve ski slopes for backcountry skiers.

*No response needed*

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Lewis-Clark ATV Club, scoping comments

Members of the club are opposed to decommissioning roads in the project area.

Decommissioning is more expensive than redesigning or long term storage and removes access from the public to public lands for hunting, hiking, and OHV'ing. Decommissioning also limits fire suppression, and future logging. The area should not be managed as a wilderness area, but open to "all" the public.

Roads 5672, 75633, 75513 should be converted to an OHV route by connecting to 373-A. This would give visitors to the national forest additional recreation opportunities. Redesigning or long term storage of roads scheduled for decommissioning is a more preferred and non-invasive action. Culverts and water crossing can be replaced or repair [sic], roads re-sloped for drainage to prevent watershed sedimentation and this would enhance future use of the area.

*Response: At this time, those segments of Roads 5672, 75633, 75513 within the project area are heavily vegetated, impassable to OHV travel and closed year round to motorized access. Proposed Intermittent Storage actions identified for Road 75513 under Alternative 2 would not preclude future considerations of converting it an OHV route which connects Road 373-A to Road 5672; however, the scope of this project is limited to road storage and decommissioning.*

There appear to be no riparian areas near roads 75636, 5955 or 5954. A connection between 5955 and 5954 would create another loop trail system to the national forest to be enjoyed by all.

*Response: Those segments of Roads 5954 and 5955 within the project area are currently closed year round to motorized vehicles. At this time they are also heavily vegetated and relatively impassable to OHV travel. Road 5954 has two live water crossings while Road 5955 runs parallel to a small stream, making these roads an ecologically inappropriate location for an OHV trail.*

We would also like to see access granted via an easement on road 102 from Powel [sic] Ranger station all the way through to the Elk Summit road giving additional access to White Sands campground. Private individuals should not be allowed to close access to through this area.

*Response: This project is limited in scope to road storage and decommissioning activities within the geographic extent of the project area.*

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Lewis- Clark ATV Club, Comment on Draft EA

The Lewis-Clark ATV Club would prefer OHV routes be created or long term storage to road decommissioning. They reiterated the loops mentioned in scoping as OHV trail loops they would like to see considered.

*Response: All roads within the project area are currently closed year round and physically impassable to motorized vehicles. The suggested alternative would require new construction that is beyond the scope of this analysis.*

*Roads 373A and 5671-D are currently connected via system road 5953. That connection would be unaffected by the proposed action. Retaining 75513 as an ATV trail would result in a redundant transportation system.*

## Appendix B.. Maps





